



New Carpool Lanes Open on U.S. Highway 50



Photo by Joe Rouse of the RTMC's Traffic Management Team

Commuters heading west on U.S. Highway 50 near Hazel enjoy the ride on Highway 50's new carpool lanes.

SACRAMENTO - Congestion relief arrived for motorists using one of the busiest freeways in the Sacramento area. A three and one-half mile carpool lane opened just in time for the weekend on Friday, March 1 on westbound Highway 50 between Folsom Boulevard and Sunrise Boulevard

The new lane will help improve the drive for thousands

of motorists traveling between El Dorado County, eastern Sacramento County and the Capital City.

The new lane is part of a \$31 million project that involves construction of carpool lanes from Sunrise Boulevard to El Dorado Hills Boulevard and improving the Sunrise Boulevard interchange. Caltrans is opening this 3.5 - mile section

now to provide immediate relief to motorists on Highway 50, rather than wait for the entire project to be completed.

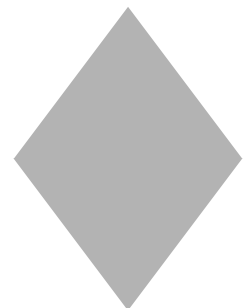
The new Highway 50 carpool lanes are a joint effort by the state and the El Dorado County Transportation Commission. The project is one of a handful in California where one county agency (the El Dorado County Transportation Commission) has helped fund a project that is predominantly located in a neighboring county.

The improvements at the Sunrise Boulevard interchange are the first of Governor Gray Davis' \$5.3 billion Traffic Congestion Relief Program (TCRP) to go to construction. More than 90 percent of 141 TCRP projects have received funding since it was unveiled in June 2000.

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Director Jeff Morales said, "The new carpool lanes on Highway 50 and the improvements at Sunrise Boulevard underscore Governor Davis' commitment to provide relief to millions of Californians stuck in traffic. The new lanes will help improve mobility in eastern Sacramento and western El Dorado counties, one of the fastest growing areas in the state."

Automobiles with two or more passengers, buses, motorcycles and low-emission vehicles with DMV decals can use the new carpool lane from 6 a.m. - 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. - 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. These hours of operation are consistent with the carpool lanes currently in use in Sacramento. All other vehicles (except large trucks) are allowed to use the carpool lane any time outside of these hours.

Caltrans' contractor, Granite Construction of Sacramento, began the project last spring. Construction is on schedule, and work will now begin on the final section of the new Highway 50 carpool lanes from Folsom Boulevard to El Dorado Hills Boulevard/Latrobe Road. This section is scheduled to be open to the motoring public by fall 2002. The improvements at the Sunrise Boulevard interchange are expected to be complete by late spring 2002.



Context Sensitive Solutions: Thinking Beyond the Pavement

“Find a way to say ‘Yes’,” proclaimed District 1 Director, Rick Knapp (Chairperson of Caltrans’ Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Steering Committee) in his opening statement to over sixty designers, planners, project managers and other disciplines at the kickoff of the North Region Technical Case Study on Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS). Following on the heels of the Department’s recently released policy on CSS, the North Region has unveiled its Phase 1 training to over 200 Regional and District employees in Eureka, Redding, Marysville and Sacramento in just 2 months.

CSS is considering the total context within which a transportation improvement exists. The training highlights a collaborative, interdisciplinary project development approach that involves all stakeholders early and often working together to achieve a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. Relationship building is a critical step in the process, and real world applications of CSS principles have produced successful projects throughout the North State.

Championed by Director Jeff Morales, the Director’s Policy #22 calls for projects to “use innovative and inclusive approaches that integrate and balance community, aesthetic, and environmental values with transportation safety and performance goals.” These approaches to transportation projects will begin in the earliest stages of planning, continue through project development and into maintenance and operations. A context sensitive approach will now be considered for all state transportation facilities, when defining, developing and evaluating options. It will also apply to local agencies and developers when doing work within State right of way.

Integral to the policy is the realization that each project involves site-specific criteria and local values that must be evaluated and incorporated into a project on a case-by-case basis. The same bridge structure designed for a Central Valley location most likely will not be appropriate for the same route in the Sierra or along the Coast. It often is not obvious that a traffic barrier, landscape design, or a traffic management plan for a stretch of highway in one town may not be an acceptable solution ten miles down the road in another community.

Nationwide transportation agencies, the Federal Highway Administration, other State Departments of Transportation, and local public works agencies are finding that a collaborative approach can streamline the design and implementation process and improve the quality, overall value, and sustainability of the project to the community and the implementing agency. Early collaboration has the opportunity to produce partnerships that bring new ideas to the table, share responsibility for decisions,

and creatively allow other funding sources to be incorporated to meet the goals of the community and our mission to improve mobility across the North Region.

Editor’s Note: This is the first of a series of articles on Context Sensitive Solutions. Future articles will offer examples of Context Sensitive Solutions contained in North Region Projects

D-3 Trio Featured in “Cone Zone” Ads

Look closely at your TV the next time you see a commercial for Caltrans’ “Slow for the Cone Zone” safety campaign - you might see District 3’s Michael Gunn, Dennis Long or Eric Uyeno.

All three participated as one of two, 30-second “Cone Zone” commercials that were recently shot on location at the Caltrans crash site at the CHP Academy in West Sacramento by SOS Films. Michael was in a cone truck, Dennis was walking in a lane closure and Eric operated the Vactor control.

District 3 set up a “simulated” lane closure to make the commercials look and feel like the real thing. Carol Bosch and Gil Correa of Maintenance Fleet Headquarters in Marysville provided all the personnel and equipment needed, including cones, signs, uniforms, safety equipment, a Vac Con truck and an attenuator. Paint crews from Caltrans District 4 paint crews also did their part to make the filming a success. They re-striped the asphalt at the crash site to make it appear it was a two-lane highway.

The strategy behind the “Slow for the Cone Zone” campaign is to focus on the danger construction zones can pose to commuters. Motorists will slow down, which means safer conditions for our people who work in construction zones.

The commercials will begin airing on TV sometime during the first two weeks of April and will continue intermittently for about six to eight weeks.





John Rodrigues
North Region Division
Chief of Construction

North Region Construction Bits

The results for the 2001 construction season are in and they show a very successful year for North Region Construction. We worked on 260 projects and paid contractors over \$320 million dollars for work last season. This is a record year! Kudos to all members of the project development team in Districts 1, 2 and 3 and all North Region employees who helped deliver these projects. Great job!

While it may seem construction folks are hibernating during the winter, in reality we are very busy. Staff is com-

pleting all the necessary paperwork for last season's projects, inspecting jobs in winter suspension for Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) requirements, performing Constructability reviews and training for the new season ahead, and helping other functional units (as well as continuing working on active jobs and storm damage projects).

Speaking of training, the annual Resident Engineer's meeting was held February 5-7 at Clear Lake. The meeting was a success and included "big picture" presentations from each of the District Directors. Brian Crane explained the funding forecast for transportation projects, Jody Lonergan spoke about "Greening of the Fleet" and Rick Knapp talked about "Context Sensitive Solutions". In addition, several

Resident Engineers and Structures Representatives presented successful and/or challenging projects they worked on in the past year. All in all it was a successful meeting. Additionally, it wouldn't be an annual meeting without a few awards. Resident Engineer's, Bob Burton and Dan Bliss, received Gold awards for their years of dedication. Mark Darnall, Carleen Hagen, Dan Kraft, Mike Jonckheere, Robert Reginato, Fernando Rivera, Jim Wood, and Geoffrey Wright all received Silver awards for their exemplary contributions during the last year.

A few changes at the Construction Manager level have occurred. In Redding, Gary Pursell has accepted a six-month acting assignment as the Deputy District Director of Planning in District 2. Don Chilton has graciously agreed to act for Gary while he is away. In the southeast area of the North Region (El Dorado, Placer, Nevada and Sierra Counties), Lynnette Spadorcio has been selected as the new Construction Manager (pending Department of Finance approval). Thanks to all for taking on these new challenges.

I hate to end on a less than positive note but here goes. We have received a number of fines from the Lahonton Regional Water Quality Control Board for Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) violations. The fines are being disputed at this time. The Department is attempting to pass these fines along to the contractor. These fines highlight the need for continual improvement to keep our partners happy!

Caltrans Improves Mobility Across California

"UNIFORM ACT" IS THE CORE OF RIGHT OF WAY

by Loree Wilson, Chief of the Office of Utility Relocation and Operations Research

(Editor's Note: Ms. Wilson recently completed a stint as the Acting Chief of North Region Right of Way)

Right of Way has the responsibility to deliver all of

the required property rights necessary to construct highway transportation projects in the State of California. There are many procedures, policies and laws that the Right of Way Agent must follow while performing right of way activities, however, at the very core of these activities is the Uniform Relocation Assistance

and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, better known as the Uniform Act.

Why Does the Uniform Act Exist?

Congress passed this Act in an attempt to make the acquisition of private property and relocation of displaced individuals and businesses fair

and equitable. Prior to the Uniform Act, states had to rely on a patchwork of statutes, case law and an assortment of federal regulations and guidelines as their principle source of guidance. It was this lack of uniformity that often gave rise to substantially disparate treatment by the many state highway agencies.

By law, the Department can acquire property through eminent domain proceedings. "Eminent domain" is the power of the government to take (or damage) private property for public purposes with payment of just compensation. The Fifth Amendment of the Constitution states in part that "...private property shall not be taken without payment of just compensation and that "no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of the law..." These protections form the basis of the Uniform Act. One of the major objectives of the regulations implementing the Uniform Act is to ensure that owners of real property to be acquired for Federal and federally-assisted projects are treated fairly and consistently, to encourage and expedite acquisition by agreements with such owners, to minimize litigation and relieve congestion in the courts, and to promote public confidence in Federal

and federally-assisted land acquisition programs.

How the Act Affects Projects/Certifications.

When acquiring property, there are many responsibilities and activities that must be accomplished to comply with this Act. For example, every property owner must be given the opportunity to accompany the appraiser during the inspection of the property. There must be a thorough investigation of relevant market data sales to ensure a fair value is established. This established amount must be offered in writing to the owner promptly. Once just compensation is offered to the property owner, the owner must be given a reasonable opportunity to consider the offer. In the meantime, the certification date draws near. If any coercive action to induce an agreement on price is made, the Uniform Act has been violated. Violation of this Act

could result in the loss of federal aid assistance in the project and possibly the loss of delegations to the state by the Federal Highway Administration. Therefore, a patient, consistent approach in reaching agreement with the owner is required. In exceptional circumstances and with prior approval of the owner, the Department may obtain a right of entry for construction purposes before making the payment available to the owners; however, this practice should be used rarely since the practical result is the use of private property without prior payment of just compensation.

When, as a result of a project, the Department displaces a person, business, farm or nonprofit organization, the Right of Way Agent must make sure that the person or business does not suffer disproportionate injuries as a result of our program. We must provide for moving and related expenses for residences and businesses,

pay replacement housing payments for homeowners, if applicable, and provide relocation advisory services to those displaced. No person shall be required to move unless replacement housing is available to such persons.

The importance of properly administering the Uniform Act program benefits and services to all property owners and displaced persons cannot be overemphasized. If we neglect to provide the services under this Act, project funding for acquisition and construction could be jeopardized. We must also be sensitive of the impacts our property acquisition activities have on people. A professionally administered program under the Uniform Act ensures that private property rights are fully protected and the public's confidence in our stewardship is enhanced.



Caltrans "Springs" Into Action

Spring is coming and with it the new construction season. As we go into this season, the Department is approaching \$7 billion in improvements underway. Take a minute to think about that magnitude. It's 50% more than three years ago. It's 25% more (in constant dollars) than what we had underway in 1963 in the "hey day" of the freeway era. That's phenomenal! And, by December 2002, we expect that number to rise to \$10 billion under construction. WOW! You should all be very proud of your contributions to providing these improvements to the traveling public. Thanks for all of your effort and hard work!

Also this spring we will be conducting an employee survey to gather input on how well we are doing and determine employees' needs. We'll be surveying 7500 employees in a stratified random sample across all functions and all levels of the organization. The survey will take place from March 7 - 20 via both e-mail and telephone. If you are chosen as part of the random sample, I encourage you to participate. Take this opportunity to provide feedback on what is important to you!

Caltrans Tree Crew Swings into Action

On Sunday, March 3, 2002, the Caltrans District 3 Tree Crew of the Sutter/Sierra Region removed a “punky elm” from E. Street between 6th and 7th Streets in Marysville.

Due to the normally high traffic counts during the week, a traffic management plan was allowed only on a Sunday. The tree crew had the lane closure in place by 8 a.m., donned safety gear, and proceeded to take the rotten tree down, limb by limb. The branches and smaller limbs were fed into a chipper. The larger limbs were lowered to the ground in a controlled manner using a rope system.

Traffic was stopped momentarily so that crewmembers Trevor Evans and Richard Schwegerl could make the final cuts to fell the tree. The trunk was hollow with crumbly wood on

the interior. “It is amazing it stood as long as it did,” remarked John Johnson, Caltrans Leadworker and loader operator. A stump grinder was used to remove what little remained and the void was filled with dirt.

A handful of people were on hand to watch the process and inquired as to the disposition of the wood. CT Tree Crew member, Steve Lowell, hauled the firewood to a wide spot on the levee off of 1st Street in Marysville, thus unavailable to the public. The chips were stock piled, to be used as mulch in future projects and roadside maintenance.



Photo: Leslie Case

Hollow, weakened trees along highways can pose a safety hazard to the public. Richard Schwegerl of the District 3 Tree Crew stands behind the decayed stump, which clearly indicates the need for removal.



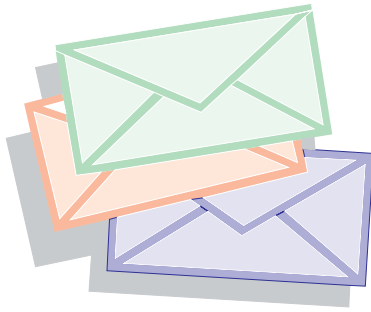
Photo: Leslie Case

Trevor Evans (working in the aerial lift truck) saws the limbs of the affected tree which are then lowered to the ground using a rope (anchored by Caltrans Tree Crew Supervisor Juan Sanchez).

Service Awards

Bill J. Winnop, a Caltrans Equipment Operator in Willows, received his 25- year service award.

Gary E. Wasson, a Caltrans Maintenance Leadworker in Truckee East, received his 25-year service award.



Praise and Recognition

Dear Superintendent LeCroix,

On January 10, 2002, a series of vehicle collisions occurred on the southbound lanes of the I-5 Bypass. One scene involved a vehicle fire that ultimately claimed two lives. Supervisor John O'Connor responded immediately, with his outstanding crew, and began dealing with the crisis.

Each and every day, my officers and your teams work together to assist the public, providing emergency aid and clearing traffic to prevent additional accidents. Perhaps, the outstanding service your personnel deliver on a daily basis becomes expected by those of us working with you.

Please be aware that the Woodland CHP Squad recognizes the efforts of Supervisor O'Connor and his personnel during the entire crisis. They were professional, and every request was met with attention. Working together we were able to render aid, conduct the investigation and clear the roadway as soon as practical.

On behalf of the Officers of the Woodland CHP, I wish to commend the efforts of all Caltrans personnel at the scene and thank you all for a job very well done.

Monty Hensley, Captain
Woodland Area Commander

To: Jody Lonergan and Tom Wood

From: Martha V. Styer, Chief

Office of ITS Development and Support

This letter is in regards to the exemplary staff of your district that were critical to the success of the very first California Department of Transportation (Department) Electrical Engineers Academy. To begin with, it was Mr. David Gamboa who pointed out the value such an academy could be, since there are so many "new" engineers with few years with the State, and the fact that there was an obvious lack of training available for these technical engineers. Ms. Zahra Niknafs then took the lead in designing the training curriculum for the intensive four days of training, which laid the foundation for future training classes. We recently completed a second successful Electrical Engineer Academy in Southern California and are moving forward with two to three Electrical Engineer Academies per year.

So many other district staff took their time to prepare and participate as speakers to teach their specific areas of expertise. The following is a list of presenters from District 3 who stepped in to help us out and did a great job.

Peter Horvath, District 3 - Construction
Steve Block, District 3 - Traffic Operations
Bob Caudle, District 3 - Traffic Operations
Tony Diaz, District 3 - Traffic Operations
Mohammed Dakkakshami, District 3 - Traffic Operations
Zahra Niknafs, District 3 - Traffic Operations
Brian Simi, District 3 - Traffic Operations
Hamid Zolfaghari, District 3 - Traffic Operations
Arturo Robles, District 2 - North Region Electrical Design

We are very fortunate to have such talented and dedicated staff and are grateful that District 3 is helping to shape the future of the Department's technical staff in electrical and electronic engineering. Thank you for your support and for such terrific staff.

Martha V. Styer, Chief
Office of ITS Development and Support

(These letters came via the Internet!)

Mr. (Jim) Edson

Donner Pass Superintendent

I just wanted to take a minute to thank you for arranging the visit by Boy Scout Troop and Crew 101. I met the kids on their return from the trip last night and they were all very excited and talked about how the big snow blower worked. Seems your people are "first - rate" in the kids' book.

I thank you and the staff of Whitmore for making the visit so enjoyable.

D.Aro, Public Works Supervisor
City of Palo Alto

Editor's note: Jim Edson, Dan Nelson and Whitmore Maintenance gave the scouts a tour of their facility.

Dear Caltrans,

I have traveled I-80 roundtrip Citrus Heights/Truckee every weekend from April 2001 to the present. I wish to thank the maintenance crews for the excellent condition of the road from Baxter to Truckee regardless of the weather. Thousands of drivers travel the highway daily never thinking of the constant efforts of the CalTrans employees to make their trip easier and safer.

I hope you will post this note, so that those out there plowing, sanding and repairing know they are appreciated by myself and surely many others.

Thank you for an easy ride!

Ken Koeppe
Citrus Heights/Truckee

Editors Note: Kudos are in order for Donner Pass Superintendent Jim Edson and Sutter/Sierra Maintenance.



Photo by Pat Dilling of Information Services

Executive Secretary Eileen Newton received one of District Office's largest bouquets on Valentine's Day. This humongous balloon bouquet came courtesy of husband John. "I like balloons better than flowers or plants," said Eileen who confessed that her thumbs were less than "green". "They seem to last longer," she concluded.

UPDATE 3

<i>Editor</i>	<i>Mark Dinger</i>
<i>Reporter</i>	<i>David Anderson</i>
	<i>Leslie Case</i>
<i>Design</i>	<i>Rosalie Newton</i>

Comments and letters are welcome. These should be sent to Mark Dinger in Public Affairs



ASK THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

DISTRICT DIRECTOR JODY LONERGAN WANTS TO HEAR YOUR CONCERNS AND SUGGESTIONS. DROP HER A NOTE. USE THIS FORM FOR SAFETY ISSUES AS WELL. ALL QUESTIONS WILL BE ANSWERED.

Name

Branch